



Picture courtesy of [Ottawa County, Ks. Historical Museum](#)

George Washington Carver

His Story Through Letters and Photographs

Who was he?

Dr.?

Teacher?

Scientist?

Inventor of peanut butter?

Student?

Farmer?

Wizard?

Introduction

Many people believe that George Washington Carver was the inventor of peanut butter. While he did discover over 300 uses for the peanut, he did not invent peanut butter. George Washington Carver is well known for his work with peanuts, but we also need to remember that he did important work with other plants as well. George Washington Carver shared what he learned from his experiments and that information was used to help improve the lives of many people.

People who lived in George Washington Carver's time had entire conversations back and forth in typed or hand-written letters. These letters were written with great care and included many details. The letters that George Washington Carver wrote, and the letters that were written to him tell us much of his life story.

George Washington Carver lived a life of service to his fellow man. In many ways he set a good example for people to try to follow. Now when we look at photographs taken of him and excerpts from letters that he wrote, we can get a glimpse of the way that he lived his life and some things that were important to him.

Photo courtesy of Tuskegee University

Task

Letters written by George Washington Carver and photographs taken of him have been chosen for this Web Quest to show several areas of George Washington Carver's life that were priorities to him. The students' job is to examine the letters and photographs and to choose one example that George Washington Carver set that they feel like they could follow.

Then they will write a friendly letter to their parents or teacher describing the example they would like to follow and explaining how they could follow that example.



Photo courtesy of Tuskegee University

Process

Step 1

Click on the links to review the letters and photographs for each of these areas which were priorities to George Washington Carver.

*George Washington Carver **had a love of and respect for nature.**

[Photo 1](#) [Photo 2](#) [Photo 3](#)
[Letter 1](#) [Letter 2](#) [Letter 3](#)

*George Washington Carver **valued education.**

[Photo 1](#) [Photo 2](#) [Photo 3](#) [Photo 4](#)
[Letter 1](#) [Letter 2](#) [Letter 3](#) [Letter 4](#)

*George Washington Carver **had a passion for art.**

[Photo 1](#) [Photo 2](#) [Photo 3](#)
[Letter 1](#) [Letter 2](#) [Letter 3](#)

*George Washington Carver **had a strong faith in God.**

[Photo 1](#) [Photo 2](#)
[Letter 1](#) [Letter 2](#) [Letter 3](#) [Letter 4](#)

*George Washington Carver **was resourceful and did not waste.**

[Photo 1](#) [Photo 2](#) [Photo 3](#)
[Letter 1](#) [Letter 2](#) [Letter 3](#)

*George Washington Carver **was a Humanitarian.**

[Photo 1](#) [Photo 2](#) [Photo 3](#) [Photo 4](#)

[Letter 1](#) [Letter 2](#)

*George Washington Carver [worked for interracial cooperation.](#)

[Photo 1](#) [Photo 2](#) [Photo 3](#) [Photo 4](#)
[Letter 1](#) [Letter 2](#)

Step 2

Choose one of the examples that George Washington Carver set that you would like to try to follow.

Step 3

Write a friendly letter to your parents or your teacher. In your letter you should describe one example that George Washington Carver set. You should also explain what things you can do to follow his example. Be sure to include all of the parts of a friendly letter. If you are not sure how to write a friendly letter you can follow this [link](#) for some help.

Evaluation

Use the following checklist to ensure that you completed all of the parts of this assignment.

	Y E S	N O
1. I looked at some pictures and letters for each area.		
2. I chose one area in which George Washington Carver set a good example that I would like to try to follow.		
3. I thought of some ways that I could follow his example.		
4. I wrote a friendly letter to my parents or teacher and explained what I think I can do.		
5. I included all of the parts of a friendly letter.		

Conclusion

In this Web Quest you learned a little about what was important to George Washington Carver. He was a man

with many admirable qualities. Your job was to choose one example that George Washington Carver set that you would like to follow.

Discussion Questions

Were you able to choose just one example that you would like to follow?

Do you know of any other people who share similarities with George Washington Carver?

Field Trip Extension

If you are going to visit George Washington Carver National Monument you can see more of George Washington Carver's letters. In the interactive exhibit area you will find an exhibit with several letters written by George Washington Carver.

Try to find a letter that shows:

- He was a humanitarian
- Education was important to him
- He had a strong faith in God
- He wanted to improve race relations

Teachers

Attention Teachers!

This Web Quest is meant to be used across K-12th grades with some adaptations. Students in 4th through 12th grades should be able to use the Web Quest independently or in small groups.

You may want to preview the letters before reading them with your class.

Some of the letters that have been linked to are hand written and may be difficult to read. If you look below the image of the letter, in the description section, you will find the text of the letter which has been word processed.

Due to the sensitive nature of one or more of the categories, and in the interest of time, please feel free to adapt this Web Quest to your specific classroom situation. The Web Quest is designed so that students do not have to review every letter and picture to complete the activity.

*Teachers task note- younger students can draw a picture of what they would like to do instead of writing a letter.

Missouri GLE's

In reading and analyzing the letters students will make connections:
K-8 Communication Arts Reading 1I

Students will write a friendly letter:
K-8 Writing 3A

Letter Excerpts

- On June 19, 1911 George Washington Carver wrote a letter to Booker T. Washington to provide details on a trip the he (George Washington Carver) had made out into the country to do some work with Alabama Clay that was being made into paint. George Washington Carver went on to inform Booker T. Washington that he was experimenting with creating new colors and had already discovered a method to make black paint which is described in the following excerpt from the letter:

“I have one kind out of which I have made a beautiful black color by simply taking some of the clay and mixing a small amount of boiler black with it. By boiler black I mean the soot that comes from our boilers, which is equivalent to lamp black. Now, we purchase a great deal of lamp black, which in many instances this boiler black is just as good.....Now, with the great amount of coal we burn here, and the large amount of fine soot that we could collect from our boilers, it would pay us to save this instead of throwing it away as we are now doing.”

Original letter in Library of Congress, Booker T. Washington Collection, Copy, Tuskegee Institute Alabama, George Washington Carver Papers, reel 1, frames 0759- 60.

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- On April 2, 1929 George Washington Carver wrote a letter to Howard A. Kester. Howard Kester was the head of the Youth Section of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in New York. Howard Kester had expressed interest in creating an office in the South that would help to establish better race relations. The following excerpt is from the letter in which Carver voiced his support of such an office.

“I have read with much interest and satisfaction your plea for an office in the South for the establishment of better race relations....I believe that the Southern people will welcome such an office, and many will lend their cooperative support....It seems to me that untold good could be done if such an office as you propose was located in the South....”

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- George Washington Carver was the director of the Tuskegee Agriculture Experiment Station. There he conducted many experiments that were focused on Southern agriculture and helping the poor farmers. As a part of George Washington Carver's job requirements at the experiment station he was required to publish bulletins explaining his work and offer them to the general public. George Washington Carver published his bulletins in a manner that they could be used by the "common" people. In the bulletins he explained how to grow specific plants, how to prepare and preserve the food that was harvested from the plant, and some of the scientific information that he had discovered about the plant. The following letter excerpt is from a letter that George Washington Carver wrote to Mahatma Gandhi on July 27, 1935. The letter is regarding a package of bulletins that Carver had sent to M.K. Gandhi. Mr. Gandhi had not

received the package, so Carver was sending him another package.

“I’m surprised to learn that you have not received the package of bulletins that I sent you. The package was mailed at the same time that I mailed your letter. I am however, sending you another set of bulletins.”

Letter excerpt courtesy of Tuskegee University

To see examples of some of George Washington Carver’s bulletins please follow the links.

[Sweet Potatoes](#)

[Peanuts](#)

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- In April of 1896 George Washington Carver accepted a teaching job at Tuskegee Institute. In a letter to the

Finance Committee at Tuskegee George Washington Carver mentioned that he would be at Tuskegee for only five years and then he would go on to study Art at the Chicago Art Institute. The following excerpt is what he said.

“...I do not expect to teach many years, but will quit as soon as I trust my work to others, and engage in my brush work, which will be of great honor to our people showing to what we may attain, along science, history, literature, and art.”

Letter to Tuskegee's Finance Committee, November 27, 1896, Carver Papers, reel 01, frame 1650

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- George Washington Carver began painting when he was a young boy on the Carver farm in Missouri. He would make his paints out of natural items such as berries. He talked about that time of his life in a letter to J.J. Lewis in 1939.

“I recall when just a boy just starting up to do artwork that I longed to paint flowers so that they would speak to the beholder, and inspire and enthuse them to do great things...”

Letter to J.J. Lewis, August 15, 1939, Carver Papers, reel 30, frame 0814

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Photographs

- Upon his arrival at Tuskegee, George Washington Carver found that he did not have a proper laboratory. One of the first things that he did was to go to the trash dump and salvage what he could to create lab equipment.



Photo courtesy of Tuskegee University

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- George Washington Carver worked to help victims of childhood paralysis and polio.



Photo courtesy of Tuskegee University

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He taught a weekly Bible class at Tuskegee using geological, as well as religious truths to explain the creation. Even though attendance was voluntary, the numbers grew steadily.

Photo courtesy of Tuskegee University

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- George Washington Carver and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.



Photo courtesy of Tuskegee University

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- George Washington Carver was a guest speaker at YMCA summer camp for young white men. He spoke about nature and creation. Many of the young men were impressed by him and he became a mentor to them. These young men became known as “Carver’s Boys.”

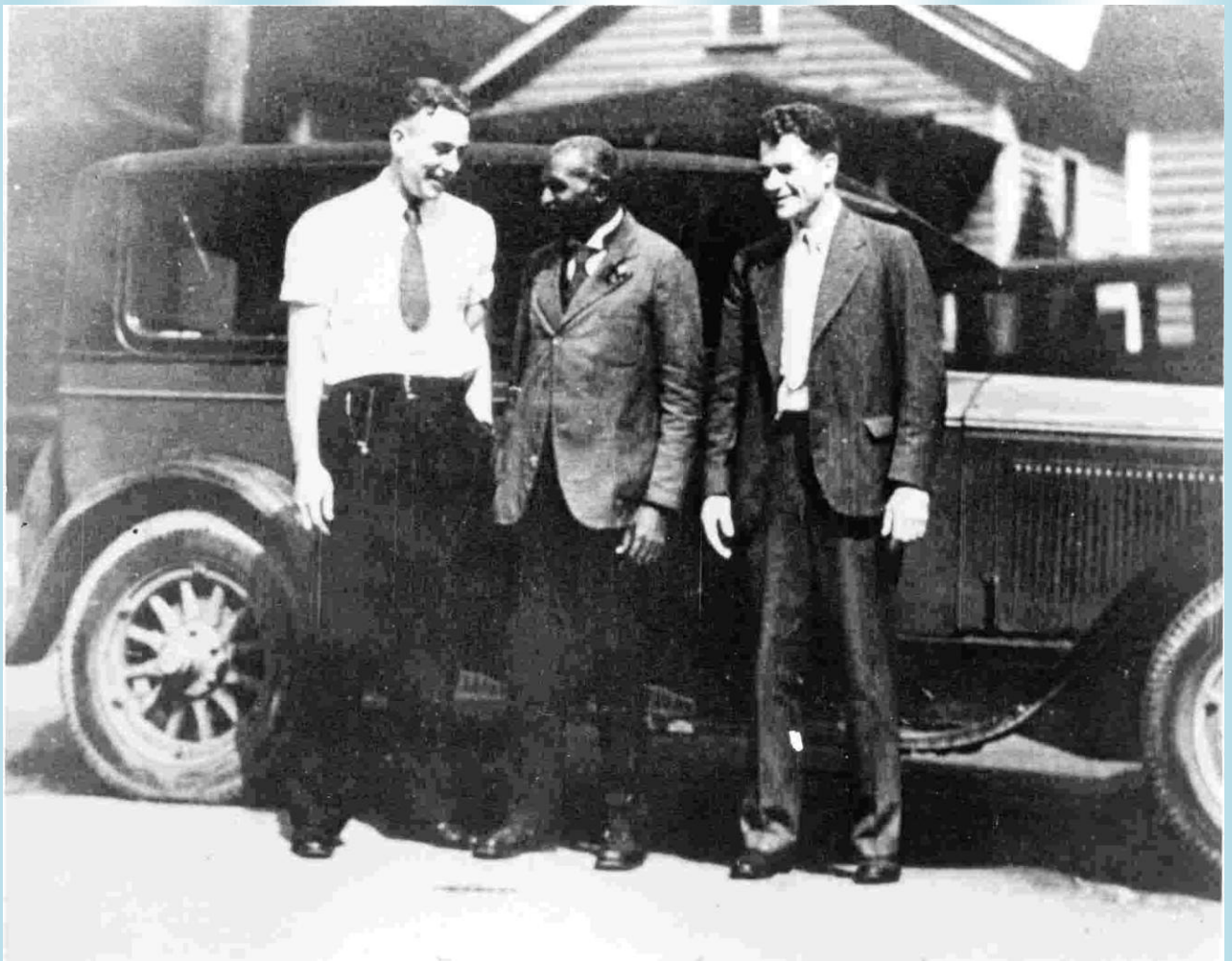


Photo courtesy of George Washington Carver National Monument, NPS

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Glossary

*A **humanitarian** is someone who works very hard to help people who need help. A humanitarian cares a lot about the needs of other people. A humanitarian does what they can to help make the lives of other people better.

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*When you say that someone **values education** it means that education is very important to them. This could mean that learning about things is important or that teaching others is important. Sometimes it could mean both.

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*When someone is **resourceful and does not waste** they use all of the things that they have to make what they want or need. This means that they might have to figure out new ways to use things. It also means that they do not throw a lot of items in the trash.

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*George Washington Carver had a **strong faith in God**. He showed this by giving God the credit for all of his accomplishments. He also taught a bible study class.

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*“**Passion for art**” means that George Washington Carver enjoyed creating art. He liked to paint and draw.

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*George Washington Carver had **a love of and respect for nature**. This means that nature was very important to him. He felt like people could many things that they wanted or needed from nature.

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*George Washington Carver **worked for interracial cooperation**. This means that he tried to do things that would improve the relationship between the African American people and white people of that time.

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